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Drilling freests early and late made the working of land a precarious source of substance until a comparatively recent period in the history of our county. As late as 1810, the fact that corn would ripen at Marlins' Bottom was nearly a years wonder. Gardens for onions, parsnips, cucumbers, pumpkins, and turnips; patches of buckwheat, corn, beans and potatoes, for many years comprised the most of pioneer farming enterprises in the way of supplementing their supplies of game and fish. The implements used for clearing and cultivating these gardens and truck patches were of home manufacture and for the most part rather crudely constructed, as were man-hauling wagons apt to be.

The people were frequently molested when at work, by the Indians. On this account the men would carry their guns with them and have them always in ready reach, it being scarcely possible to keep a work horse because of raiding Indians, most of the labor of the farming had to be done with axes. In the course of time when horses and corn could be kept and used, plows were in demand. The first plows were made entirely of seasoned hardwood. Later an improvement was made by attaching an iron plate to the plowing beam, and the "share plow" was evolved.

To smooth and pulverize the earth for planting, the

Place of the harrow was supplied by a crabapple tree or a blackthorn bush, pressed down by heavy pieces of root fastened on by hickory withes or strips of leatherhead, and some nice work was done by these extemporized harrows. The first harrows that superseded these crab and blackthorn, had work-an frame shaped like a big A, and the teeth were made of seasoned hickory or white oak.

The first rakes that were used to cut the meadows were hand-made by the neighborhood blacksmith, and were hammered out instead of whittled to put them in cutting order. The smooths were straight sticks, and in mowing the mowers were bent into horizontal, semicircular curved shapes, as if they were looking for holes in the ground, or snakes in the grassy weeds.

For handling hay or grain, forks were made of bifurcated saplings of maple or dogwood carefully peeled and well seasoned. They became as smooth as ivory. These forks went out of use by 1860.

When the pioneer came to need more land than mere patches, they would chop three or four acres and a log rolling was in order. By invitation the neighbors for miles would meet with their teams of horses or oxen, to assist in putting up logheaps for burning. This being done a feast was enjoyed and all returned homeward. The next thing was to turn the heaps. Outside the clearing a wide belt was rolled inwardly to prevent the fire from getting away. The preferred time for burning the logs and brush was at night when all would be still and calm. It was an impressive sight

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a witness as the smoke and flames of the burning heaps rose like pillars of fire by night, while the men, steadily and busily, passed among them keeping up the fires.

Another interesting pioneer social gathering was the "raising" of the dwelling or barn. No pay was expected, simply the return of a like favor when notified.

As a rule pioneer festivities were orderly, yet occasionally there would be a few persons at the gathering who prided themselves in being and doing ugly things. Somewhere about the premises there was something they would speak of as "Black Betty". After a few visits to this jug there would be a few fights, which made the gathering the talk of the neighborhood until some other exciting thing came around.

In the early times now under consideration it was an essential matter that every thing needed for comfortable use about the house should be made at home or some where in the immediate neighborhood. Thus it came that pioneer wives and daughters were not only ornamental but very useful in promoting the comforts and attractions of their homes by the skill of their willing hands. Every household of any pretensions of independence or thrift had a loom, spinning wheel, a flax breaker, sheep shears, wall cards, and what ever else needful for changing wool and flax into clothing and blankets.

Sheep were raised on the farms and were usually sheared by the boys and girls. The wives and daughters would thereupon scour, card and spin, weave and knit the wool

into clothing.

Flax was grown in the flax patch, usually a choice bit of ground. When ripe the flax was pulled by hand, spread in layers until dry upon the ground where it had been pulled then bound in bundles, carried away and spread very neatly over the cleanest and nicest sod to be found, most commonly the aftermath of the meadow. Here it remained with an occasional overturning until it was "weathered". This required three or four weeks. Then it was gathered, bound in bundles and stored away in shelter until cool, frosty days in late fall, winter or early spring. Then it would be broken by the flax breaker, then scutched by the scutching knife over an upright board fastened to a block. Then what was left of the woolly part by the breaker and scutching knife would be combed out by the heckle and was now ready to be spun and woven into flax a coarse flax cloth. The finer fiber was woven into fine linen. This work was done by the women, and neighbors usually helped each other. They had what was called flax scutchings. Flax was most commonly put through the entire process from planting to weaving without leaving the farm on which it was grown.

From--- Hist. of Rocktonia County
H.T. Price